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Letter dated 27 May 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Eritrea to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to forward to you the attached copy of a letter from Isaias Afwerki, President of the State of Eritrea, to the Secretary-General written today, 27 May 2000 (see annex).

The Security Council has, through constant communication from the Eritrean Government and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) — and the Ethiopian Government for that matter — been informed about the positions and actions of the Eritrean and Ethiopian Governments particularly since Ethiopia's latest offensive against Eritrea started on 12 May 2000. Subsequent to its acceptance of the latest request of OAU to immediately redeploy to 6 May 1998 positions, the Eritrean Government has now redeployed its troops from the entire border area between the two countries far beyond what the Ethiopian regime could ever claim to have been controlling prior to May 1998, to leave no room for the Ethiopian Government to use any pretext to continue its war of invasion against Eritrea. Redeployment from "Bada" and "Burrie", the two areas described in President Isaias' letter, has also thus been implemented.

The Organization of African Unity forwarded its latest proposal for immediate redeployment by both sides to 6 May 1998 positions in order to stop the fighting and continue the OAU-sponsored peace process. Redeployment was to be made fully consistent with the stipulations of the OAU modalities, which envisaged a cessation of hostilities before redeployment, with each side committed not to take advantage of the other's troop withdrawal to positions held before 6 May. Openly rejecting this stipulation, the Ethiopian Government has moved its forces into the areas our troops redeployed from, that is advanced deep into undisputed Eritrean territory throughout the border areas. Not only has it occupied these areas, but it also continues to fight to extend its invasion. In the Eritrean territories Ethiopia has occupied, its troops are perpetrating the most horrendous crimes, killing innocent civilians and destroying and plundering property.

The Security Council has, in both resolutions 1297 (2000) and 1298 (2000), demanded that both parties immediately cease all military action. Eritrea had agreed to comply, but has been forced to defend itself because of Ethiopia's invasion of its sovereign territory. Ethiopia defied the Council's demand and continues to do so even after Eritrea's full compliance with the OAU proposal for redeployment of troops to pre-6 May positions. Is the Security Council going to ignore Ethiopia's

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defiance, which sets a dangerous precedent for undermining the Council's credibility, the erosion of its authority as a guardian of international security? What more is needed to prove Ethiopia's agenda against Eritrea's very existence as an independent, sovereign State than what Ethiopia has already done and continues to do? How can the Security Council explain its silence, its inaction in the face of such an open affront to the very principles and norms it exists to defend and protect?

It should not be difficult to conclude that Ethiopia's continuation of its war of aggression against Eritrea will only increase the Eritrean people's resolve to fight to defend our independence and dignity. Naturally, under the circumstances of naked Ethiopian invasion of Eritrea, it is only rational and just to expect that the Security Council will not and cannot deny Eritrea its right and weaken its capacity to defend itself. The Government of Ethiopia fully bears responsibility for the continuation of the war and the danger it causes to peace and stability in the wider region and, needless to say, the attendant suffering Ethiopia's war of aggression is causing and will continue to cause the peoples of Eritrea and Ethiopia.

Eritrea hopes that the Security Council will now stop addressing its so far toothless statements and resolutions to "stop fighting" to "both sides", call a spade a spade and take strong, appropriate measures against the Ethiopian regime if only to uphold the principles and its own resolutions that bind it to do so.

I should be grateful if you would kindly circulate the text of the present letter and its annex as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Haile **Menkerios**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex to the letter dated 27 May 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Eritrea to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Asmara, 27 May 2000

You will recall that Eritrea has publicly announced its decision to redeploy its forces to areas it held on 6 May 1998 on the basis of the OAU communiqué and the modalities of implementation. This decision was fully executed beginning at midnight on 25 May 2000.

But yesterday, Ethiopia unleashed an attack against our forces which had redeployed 15 km north of Zalanbessa. The fact that the Ethiopian Government is now publicly declaring that it has occupied these areas by force and that its attacks will continue is additional and incontrovertible evidence of its invasion. As you will agree, this act does not only constitute a serious breach of the OAU peace agreements but it underlines mean treachery and accentuates the open invasion that Ethiopia is perpetrating against Eritrea.

Although Eritrea completed the redeployment of its troops to the 6 May line on Thursday, 25 May, Ethiopia raised new claims during the visit of the current Chairman of OAU, President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, to Addis Ababa, arguing that there were "additional areas" which it referred to as "Bada" and "Burrie", from which Eritrea was asked to redeploy. These are not only undisputed sovereign Eritrean territories, but there was never any Ethiopian presence in those places prior to 6 May 1998 or thereafter.

While these are the true facts, Eritrea nonetheless agreed to redeploy from these areas for the sake of peace. This decision, as well as the instructions sent to the relevant commanders in those areas to implement the decision, was communicated to the current Chairman of OAU before his departure from Asmara yesterday and to the international community through a public statement.

If Ethiopia perpetrates an attack in those areas and continues its attacks in other parts of the country, Eritrea expects the international community to take forceful action, as these attacks represent not only a continuation of Ethiopia's invasion but also open contempt for the international community and the rule of law.

Eritrea has accepted the invitation of the current Chairman of OAU to participate in the proximity talks which will be held in Algiers. It will not, however, be tenable or justifiable to conduct proximity talks while Ethiopia continues to wage its war of invasion. Moreover, since Ethiopia's intentions of carrying out an invasion have been exposed and all its pretexts for continuing the war removed, I urge you, and through you the Security Council and the international community at large, to condemn Ethiopia's invasion of a sovereign State in violation of international law and the Charters of OAU and the United Nations and to take appropriate punitive measures against Ethiopia.

(*Signed*) Isaias **Afwerki**
President
The State of Eritrea